

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Report Highlights:

Report contains agricultural news items of interest for Italy, the EU and the world for the month of March 2011.

General Information:

Italian Ag News ITALY

Italy Screening Japanese Food Imports

Following the nuclear incident in Japan, the Italian Ministry of Health has announced that while they are not “banning” food imports from Japan, they have increased testing for the detection of radionuclides especially in Japanese fish, caviar, seaweed, soya sauce and green tea. *ANSA*

GMO: Legal and Illegal Seizures on the Italian Market

In recent months two major GMO seizures were conducted on the Italian market: the first by an international organization Greenpeace, while the second by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture’s Italian Inspectorate for quality protection and fraud prevention of food and agricultural products (ICQRF). In the first seizure conducted by Greenpeace the target was an Italian company based in Bari (Dentamaro Ltd) who was found “guilty” of producing GM soy oil. The oils however, clearly stated on the label that they were produced from GM soy. Nonetheless, according to Greenpeace selling GM oil “hurts Italian oil producers and consumers, damaging the image of Made in Italy food products” and therefore should be punished.

By EU regulations it is legal to sell GM soy oil as long as it is clearly stated on the label. The second seizure conducted by the ICQRF authorities in Bologna and involved 30,000 kilos of soy beans which had tested positive for the presence of GMOs. In this case the product was seized because of the non-declaration of the presence of GMO soybeans in the product label. Therefore, the action was strictly related to labeling and not because it was a GM product. The EU general framework for regulating genetically modified (GM) food and feed is outlined in Regulation (EC) 1829/2003. The Regulation is supplemented by Regulation (EC) 1831/2003 which ensures traceability and labeling of GMOs placed on the market. The EU regulations on GM labeling exist since 2004. The placement on the market of GM foodstuffs whether they are intended for consumption by humans or animals is regulated by a specific Authorization Procedure. All food and feed must be labeled as containing GMOs to enable consumers to make an informed decision. It must also follow traceability standards laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 for improved protection of human and animal health. The Regulation on genetically modified food and feed introduces a centralized procedure of authorization by the European Commission is based on an independent risk assessment carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). *Italian Ministry of Agriculture*

FEATURE ARTICLE

International Women’s Day Event

U.S. Secretary of State Clinton addressed issues of Women and Agriculture at an International Women’s Day event hosted by the three UN Rome-based Agencies for Food and Agriculture (FAO), the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In a video statement Secretary Clinton spoke about the importance of empowering and supporting women in agriculture. The Secretary of State said, “By increasing our support for women farmers, we can increase food production; improve nutrition, health, and education; help women earn higher incomes, and support broader economic growth.” Furthermore, Secretary Clinton stated, “We are building our knowledge of how to close the agriculture gender gap. The work underway in Rome and elsewhere must continue, so that future generations of women and girls can have an even greater impact on the world, wherever they live, wherever they work, and wherever they farm.” *U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome*

THE EUROPEAN UNION

EU Talks on Banning Food from Cloned Animals Fail

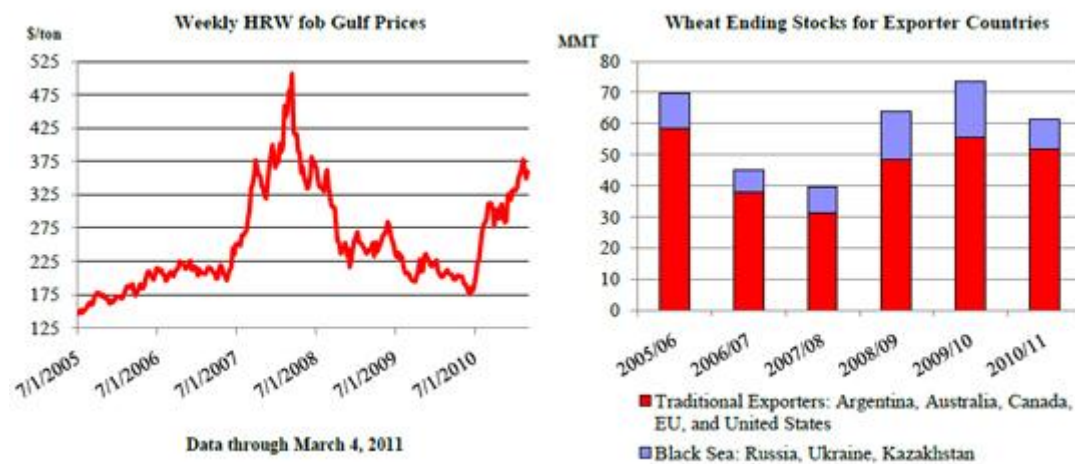
European Union negotiators abandoned a widely popular new legislation that would have banned cloning animals to produce food, after all-night talks bogged down in disagreement. Last-ditch negotiations between EU Parliament and EU governments could not find a compromise on how to treat the offspring of cloned animals — despite overwhelming agreement on banning food from the actual clone. The collapse of talks caps three years of back and forth between the

parliament and the European Council, which represents the 27 EU states, on the so-called "novel food" regulation. It leaves the EU with its 1997 law that requires special authorization for milk and meat from cloned animals, but does not ban the practice of cloning nor the import of food from cloned animals. It is a victory for food producers from countries such as United States where cloning is more advanced than in Europe. The Commission sees the issue mostly as a threat to animal welfare, which is why it proposed a temporary ban of cloning to produce food in the EU as well as the banning the import of such food. At the moment there are no definite figures on how much food made from clones or their offspring there is in the EU. In Europe, there are few cloned animals and they exist mostly for scientific research purposes. *AGRA Press*

End of Dispute with Canada over Hormone Fed Cattle

After a year of dispute, the EU and Canada have managed to settle their disagreement at the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the EU ban on hormone-treated beef which remains banned in Europe. The European Commission and the Canadian government signed a draft agreement on a roadmap which, once confirmed, will provide a temporary settlement to the dispute. The bulk of the preliminary agreement stipulates that Canada will suspend all its penalties on the import of goods from the EU - additional customs duty levied since 1999 in retaliation against the ban on imports into the EU of hormone-treated beef from Canada - in exchange for which Canada will be granted extra export quotas for high-quality beef from cattle not treated with growth hormones. An additional quota of 1,500 tons of non-hormone-treated beef will be granted by August 2012, and this might be increased to 3,200 tons the following year. The EU and Canada will assess the situation in 2013 and decide whether or not to continue with this arrangement indefinitely. *Agence Europe*

High Wheat Prices Despite Abundant Exporter Stocks



There is normally a strong inverse relationship between international wheat prices and stocks held by major exporting countries because they are mostly available for export to the world market. Global wheat prices, as reflected by Hard Red Winter (W), have nearly doubled over the last year. The surge was initially fuelled by smaller crops and export restrictions in some major exporting countries, then concerns over available supplies of milling quality wheat. Prices are reflecting other factors, including a tight U.S. corn market, poor winter wheat crop conditions in the United States, and political unrest in North Africa and the Middle East.

Exporter stocks remain relatively high and are boosted almost 4 million tons this month. In fact, they are estimated to be 55 percent higher than during the price crisis of 2007/08. Stocks are up this month on more supplies from key Southern Hemisphere countries, namely, Argentina and Australia, and less import demand, particularly from Russia. U.S. stocks are raised on lower foreign demand as a result of greater competition from Australia. *FAS*

FAS Italy Regional REPORTING

- New Italian Minister of Agriculture Francesco Saverio Romano (Italy)
- Fresh and Processed Fruit Product Brief 2011 (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Trade Policy Monitoring Annual 2011 (Croatia)
- Cotton and Products Annual 2011 (Greece)

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